DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 173 002 RC 011 463

AUTHOR Bataille, Gretchen
TITLE Transformation of Tradition: Autobiographical Works by Native American Women.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 31p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *American Indians; *Autobiographies; *Biographies; Comparative Analysis; Ethnography; *Females; Feminism; Literature; *Role Perception; Sex Discrimination; *Social Status; Stereotypes; Tribes
IDENTIFIERS Native Americans

ABSTRACT

The Indian woman has been viewed as a subservient and oppressed female; often overlooked were the economic, social and political positions women held within tribal societies. The biographies and autobiographies of Indian women that have been obtained over the last century can be used to examine this contradiction in perspectives. These accounts have undergone changes in several significant ways over the years, including changes in the perception of audience, purpose of revealing the life story, and the economic and/or political climate of the period of recording. The earliest material was told by the women through an interpretor to an anthropologist. The purpose was not to focus on an individual life but to illuminate a culture and the scientist or editor chose what was significant. Emphasis in early accounts was placed on the roles of males and females, the familial relationships, material culture, and a regret for the changes from the old ways. In recent narratives Indian women often are writing their own stories and choosing the material they themselves want to include. Many of these stories reflect the dilemma of the pulls between the traditional ways and the pushes toward acculturation. The Indian woman is and has been strong within her culture and the life stories of Indian women support this perspective. This document discusses specific biographies of Native American women; it provides bibliographic citations for the sources quoted and additional listings for other autobiographical works and resource material. (DS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Gretchen Bataille

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

© 1978

Gretchen Bataille
Department of English
Iowa State University

Transformation of Tradition: Autobiographical Works by Native American Women

SCOPE OF INTEREST NOTICE
The ERIC Facility has assigned this document for processing to: RC CS

In our judgement, this document is also of interest to the clearinghouses noted to the right. Indexing should reflect their special points of view.

A nation is not conquered
Until the hearts of its women
Are on the ground.
Then it is done, no matter
How brave its warriors
Nor how strong its weapons. [1]
(Cheyenne)

Shirley Hill Witt, in quoting the Cheyenne people, is speaking for Indian women of all times and in all tribal communities. But if we were to read and listen to some of those who have written about Native American women we would come away with a different view from this age-old belief of the power of the Indian woman. The attitude which until recently assumed the inferiority of all women was one from which the Native American woman was not spared. The view that Indian women were and are inferior to their men permeates early writings about native societies and it is an attitude which some recent writers have perpetuated. John C. Ewers and Valerie S. Mathes both assume that women's duties (caring for home and children, preparing food and hides, etc.) were less significant or important than the male roles of hunting and warfare. Mathes cites as one of her conclusions about Indian women of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries that they were viewed as inferior to men. [2] Her sources, however, are white men such as George Catlin, Lewis Henry Morgan, Edwin T. Denig, and Washington Irving. For further support of the inferiority of Indian women she uses a quotation from Pretty Shield's autobiography on the division of labor between men and women. Pretty Shield, however, does not in the particular statement or in her book suggest that the division of labor presumes that women are in a subservient position. Mathes further contradicts her first conclusion by admitting that Indian women were accorded a number of economic, social, and political opportunities within tribal society. While her first conclusion is supported only by the evidence from white accounts, her final assessment is clearly documented by recorded autobiographies of Native American women near the end of the 19th century and early in the 20th century.

ED173002
RC011463
CN001738

The popular view of Native American women, however, assumes that women's work is by nature inferior to that done by men. John C. Ewers offers a broad generalization about Indian men and women:

> The Indian Country of the Upper Missouri was a man's world before the white man's civilization penetrated that remote portion of the interior of our continent. Indian men were the hunters and warriors. As partisans they led war parties. As chiefs they deliberated in tribal councils and negotiated intertribal peaces. They were the seekers of visions, the makers and manipulators of powerful medicine bundles, and the conductors of prolonged and involved religious rituals. Women, on the other hand, were the diggers of roots and collectors of berries, the carriers of firewood and drawers of water, the dressers of hides and makers of tipis and clothing. As homemakers and housekeepers they performed scores of tasks necessary to the welfare of their families. But their role was a humble one. The Indian woman's inferior status. . . .[3]

The subjective judgment is made about the Indian woman's "inferior status" based on the duties she performed within the tribe. Ewers fails to cite the role Iroquois women played in politics, nor does he include here the women warriors he writes about in a later article[4]--Other Magpie, Woman Chief, Throwing Down, and Running Eagle.

Many current views contradict the conclusions drawn by Mathes and Ewers. Clara Sue Kidwell argues convincingly that "the positions of women in European societies, largely derived from Judaic and Christian ideals of womanhood, led European men to overlook the power that Indian women could wield in their own societies."[5] Kidwell further asserts that "the idea of the roles of Indian women in their own societies that emerges from the literature in which women tell their own stories contradicts the usual stereotypes of the subservient and oppressed female."[6] Support for this view comes from other Native American women today. Bea Medicine, Sioux anthropologist, has repeatedly said in lectures and in writing that Indian women do not need "liberation," that they have always been liberated within their tribal structures.

Given what appear to be conflicting views on the roles of women within Native American communities and in light of the feminist movement, it seems logical to examine this contradiction in perspectives. One of the ways to know a people is through the individual lives of the members of the group. Biography and autobiography have through the ages illuminated history by focusing on those persons who had changed the course of events or who had been thrust into notoriety or fame because of circumstances. The best known names of Native Americans and those whose lives were early chronicled tended to be men--men such as Geronimo or Black Hawk who distinguished themselves in warfare, or Chief Joseph whose military strategies gained him respect. Similarly early semi-fictional accounts of Squanto, Sequoya, and Powhatan focused on men who had been leaders, who had befriended settlers and who had attempted to acculturate to European ways. The two women most remembered from childhood books to history texts are Pocahontas and Sacajawea, Indian women who married Europeans and sought to become "white." Of Indian women we know far less than we do of their male counterparts throughout history, and what writers from Catlin through Ewers have accepted as fact does not appear to be substantiated by Indian women's life stories or by Indian women today.

The autobiographies of Native American women have undergone changes in several significant ways during the last century. Most obvious is a change of attitude on the part of the subject. The self-consciousness which is apparent in early life stories told by an informant (often remaining anonymous) through a translator to an anthropologist changed as women became more aware of their white audience and the pressures toward acculturation and, as Indian people became more a part of the dominant society, the autobiographies reflected this movement toward assimilation and integration. Recent autobiographies reflect a far more conscious attempt to present a story of an individual Indian woman and her relationships to the tribe, to other native people, and to the non-Indian world.

Ethnographers had a distinct purpose for wanting to hear the stories; they were after anthropological data to round out field reports. The material chosen for inclusion by these editors represented what they thought was significant. Today Indian women writing their own stories are choosing the material they wish to include.

This paper will trace these changes in attitude and will also focus on the influences which have acted upon the writers or informants. The changes have been results of several factors: perception of audience, purpose of revealing one's life, the role of an editor, and the economic and/or political climate of the period of recording.

At the end of the 19th century and early in the 20th century with a rising interest in native customs and an increasing desire "to salvage the remains of a culture" anthropologists and ethnologists began recording life stories. The purpose was not to focus on an individual life, but rather to "use" a single life to illuminate a culture. Interestingly, the women whose lives were recorded during that period were not "princesses" but rather were the mothers and wives of the tribe. Their stories differ from the stories of their male contemporaries in that they do not tell of war exploits but rather of the gathering of herbs. They focus on preparing buffalo rather than hunting it. They tell of raising children rather than of racing horses. These differences reflect the division of roles in the cultures. More than any other feature, these stories reflect the relationships of women and men within a tribe.

As autobiographies moved from the traditional mode of oral literature from one generation to the next, much of the element of "storytelling" was inevitably lost. When the stories were written down, facial expressions, hand movements, and pauses were absorbed into the printed page. Editors decided what elements were significant to a woman's life or, more often, significant to field research on a given tribe. Indian women recognized that not all their lives could be communicated in a "foreign" language and that events which they considered significant might be considered naive or unimportant by their white interviewers. Taboos were broken; to tell the life story of the family, women were often forced to speak the names of the dead. In the best tradition of contemporary storytelling, Mountain Wolf Woman told Nancy Lurie a short version of her life. Then, recognizing that this was not acceptable, she carefully told the longer version which she knew Lurie wanted.

The contradictions inherent in recent analyses of the role of Native American women necessitate a closer look at the modes of expression as well as the content in Native American women's autobiographies. When one looks at continuities in the autobiographies the temptation exists to say there has been little change. Some Indian women are still transmitting

life stories through interpreters and editors much as they did at the turn of the century. A closer examination, however, reveals some gradual changes in purpose, attitude, and the role of the editor.

If we turn first to the earliest materials and the views of the "collectors" we find men who perceived themselves as necessary to salvage what would soon be lost:

> It is evident that aboriginal manners and customs are rapidly disappearing, but notwithstanding that disappearance much remains unknown, and there has come a more urgent necessity to preserve for posterity by adequate record the many survivals before they disappear forever.[7]

The attitude of the "white man's burden" predominated in the earliest recorded autobiographies. Early enthnologists considered the life stories as only a small part of the total field report on a given group, however. Kroeber quotes Franz Boas who described autobiographies as being "of limited value, and useful chiefly for the study of the perversion of truth by memory."[8] In his article on the use of autobiographical evidence he continues that "among nonliterate tribal folk some normal elderly persons are likely to feel their life not as something interesting in its individuation and distinctiveness, but as an exemplification of a socialization. Such a person is conscious of himself first of all as a preserver and transmitter of his culture."[9] It is this assumption which is borne out by some of the earliest autobiographies and which also accounts for publications such as Elsie C. Parson's American Indian Life[10] which were largely fictional accounts based on field research. It is impossible to know how much was deleted by editors interested more in the culture than in the individual. Kroeber cites Michelson's Narrative of a Southern Cheyenne Woman and Narrative of an Arapaho Woman as examples in which the narrator submits individuality and personal feeling in order to express the accepted social standards of the group. Although the bulk of Michelson's reports disclose familial relationships, courtship and marriage, and some ritual, both the informants and the editor make it clear that there are omissions. In speaking of the "Tipi Decorators,"

the Southern Cheyenne Woman says "I was very carefully instructed never to disclose the ceremony in the presence of males. So I shall be obliged to discontinue the subject."[11] Michelson himself tells us in the preface to the Fox Woman's autobiography: "It may be noted that at times the original autobiography was too naive and frank for European taste, and so a few sentences have been deleted."[12] And Frank B. Linderman, writing of his translation of Pretty Shield's life story comments, "Such a story as this, coming through an interpreter laboring to translate Crow thoughts into English words, must suffer some mutation, no matter how conscientious the interpreter may be."[13]

In 1936 Ruth Underhill published the story of an old Papago Woman, Maria Chona. Taken through an interpreter, the words expressed Maria's thoughts, but Underhill arranged the material in chronological order. The ethnocentrism of Underhill is expressed in her analysis of the material:

> Indian narrative style involves a repetition and a dwelling on unimportant details which confuse the white reader and makes it hard for him to follow the story. Motives are never explained and the writer has found even Indians at a loss to interpret them in older myths. Emotional states are summed up in such colorless phrases as "I liked it," "I did not like it." For one not deeply immersed in the cultures the real significance escapes.[14]

Her descriptions, "unimportant details" and "colorless phrases," plus her admission that she omitted repetitions and emphasized points Maria had not, suggest the ability of the editor to change the original story in significant ways. Underhill says, "It is an Indian story told to satisfy whites rather than Indians."[15] In Maria's story itself she tells the reader she was "different" because she had husbands who took her places and she knew cures and songs. She was also independent enough to leave her husband when he took another wife. The contemporary reader must wonder at the independence and mobility that marked Maria Chona's life, especially in light of the stereotype of the Indian woman. Maria was telling her story at age 90, so it is possible her memory was not as sharp as it could have been. Nevertheless, despite the intrusion of a white editor, Maria comes across as an individual Indian woman who was aware of her personal skills and position within the tribe. She was also aware of the changes which were taking place

within her society and referred to liquor and Catholicism and their influence on the people. She pointed out, too, that her father was buried rather than being put in a cave and that they no longer slept on mats but had started using blankets and pillows. Throughout the autobiography Maria is aware of her audience--"white people"--and often relates events in her life to experiences with which the audience could identify. But there are elements in the work which identify Maria's life as one which certainly did not fit any stereotypes. She recognized that as a song maker and visionary she was not typical of the tribe, but she also had powers to cure and skills at basketmaking which set her apart from the majority of both men and women.

Looking closely at the earliest autobiographies, one sometimes finds clear statements of the woman's personal thoughts and purposes for telling the story. Even when the statements are veiled, the impact of the thought is clear. Waheenee, telling her story in 1921, reveals her sadness

> I am an old woman now. The buffalo and black-tail deer are gone and our Indian ways are almost gone. Sometimes I find it hard to believe I ever lived them. . . . I cannot forget our old ways. Often in summer I rise at daybreak and steal out to the cornfields; and as I hoe the corn I sing to it, as we did when I was young. No one cares for our corn songs now. Sometimes at evening I sit, looking out on the Big Missouri. The sun sets, and dusk steals over the water. In the shadows I seem again to see our Indian village, with smoke curling up- upward from the earth lodges, and in the river's roar I hear the yells of the warriors, the laughter of little children as of old. It is an old woman's dream. Again I see but shadows and hear only the roar of the river; and tears come into my eyes. Our Indian life, I know, is gone forever.[16]

Her editor, because of a different perspective about the past brushes these deep thoughts away:

> "Conservative and sighing for the good old times, she is aware that the younger generation of Indians must adopt civilized ways."[17]

Michelson's Arapaho Woman says that she won't tell private or personal experiences out of respect for her male relatives, but she subtly reveals the differences between the present and the past:

> There were no briar weeds, or stickers, or burrs; so the children as well as their parents were nearly always barefooted. All that one could see on the prairies was grass, buffalo grass, and blue stem. When camps were pitched we would make our beds on the ground with grass for undercushions. The air was always fresh. We wore no head-shade; in fact we didn't mind the weather in those days.[18]

Pretty Shield's reluctance to talk about the changing conditions of her people and her admission, "I am trying to live a life that I do not understand," suggest deep and yet unclear feelings about the life she is relating.[19] She is not ambivalent, however, in her statement about the changes the men in the tribe have experienced:

> Our men had fought hard against our enemies. . . . Our men, our leaders, began to drink the white man's whiskey, letting it do their thinking. . . . Our wise ones became fools. . . . But what else was there for us to do?. . . Our old men used to be different.[20]

Lucy Young may have spoken for all the women whose life stories were "corrected" and "grammatically improved" by white editors. She told her brief story in 1939 when she was over 90 years old. She lived through the period all of the previously-mentioned women did and tells us why her story needed to be told:

> I hear people tell 'bout what Inyan do early days to white man. Nobody ever tell it what white man do to Inyan. That's reason I tell it. That's history. That's truth. I seen it myself.[21]

All of these women's lives come to us through at least one intermediary, often several. We can only generalize about what their stories say about the role of women, but careful reading suggests nothing akin to the subservient or inferior status of Indian women. Emphasis is placed on the roles of both males and females, the familial relationships, material culture, and, above all, a regret for the changes from the old ways.

A collection which was published in 1974 but had been gathered during the 1940s is that done by Elizabeth Colson, Autobiographies of Three Pomo Women. Colson intended for the life stories to supplement the ethnographies on Pomo culture and to provide some insight into the lives of the Pomo women who had grown up during the period of acculturation. It is perhaps

Mrs. Martinez's comments which best epitomize the pulls on women's lives during this period. When asked what she wanted for her granddaughter, she answered:

> I think if she stayed home with me and made baskets that would be good. And I want her to go to school and learn something. That would be good too.[22]

The pulls toward tradition and the pushes toward acculturation are apparent in the autobiographies of these three women.

The next major group of life stories reflects this dilemma and in part provides the reader with the answer many Indian women felt comfortable with. Following the period of autobiography collected for ethnographical study came a period during which Indian women chose consciously to write their own life stories, sometimes still with the aid of an editor, but often independently. Nancy Lurie writes of this period:

> By 1930s Indian women seemed to have held up better under the stresses of reservation life than men and were often in the forefront of work in tribal councils and business committees. . . . Women were said to have suffered less "acculturation stress."[23]

Lurie comments also that during the period of acculturation and indoctrination men were learning vocational and technical skills which often were of no use on the reservation. Women, however, were being trained in teaching, nursing, and office work, skills which could be put to use on the reservation. Despite the fears of the loss of the old ways, the women survived and continued to provide direction for the people. What was this direction and what do the autobiographies during this period suggest were the prevailing attitudes? Generally the autobiographies of this period reflect the acceptance of white culture, of Christianity, and of public education rather than traditional tribal education. The old ways are not forgotten, but they are seen as unworkable in a new social order.

Anauta, an Eskimo woman from Baffin Island, traveled widely speaking throughout the country. She recognized the difficulty of adjusting and said of the book which told her life story:

> It's all my life. . . . I live more myself in that book than I do any time now in this new life of adjusting myself to a new world.[24]

There is during this period a conscious attempt to correct the misinformation about Indians as savages and to bring the Indian and white worlds closer together. Polingaysi Qoyawayma says that her autobiography is an attempt to "span the great and terrifying chasm between my Hopi world and the world of the white man." When the author decided to go to school, her mother admonished her:

> You have taken a step in the wrong direction. A step away from your Hopi people. You have brought grief to us. To me, to your father, and to your grandparents. Now you must continue to go to school each day. You have brought this thing upon yourself, and there is no turning back.[25]

Her grandmother warned her of the loss of Hopi beliefs and culture, but she also reminded her of her responsibility as a member of the coyote clan to provide a bond between the Bahana (white man) and the Hopi people. She does not reject her heritage, but she assumes that many of the traditional ways will indeed be lost. She recognizes that the education of the children is now in the hands of the teachers and the public schools rather than the mothers or grandmothers, and she advises the educators to "help them to realize the value of their own heritage."[26]

There were other women in this generation of writers who accepted white ways and Christianity. Helen Sekaquaptewa adopted the Morman religion and white attitudes, and her life story reflects this perspective.[27] Anna Shaw, whose parents had converted to Christianity and who herself was unique among Indian women in receiving a high school diploma in 1920, is described by Edward Spicer as a "culturally assimilated Presbyterian Pima."[28] Her own view of Indian life is that she moved from the reservation to the white world and finally back to a blend of the two. She describes her experiences naively, however, saying she did not experience discrimination at school, that discrimination did not exist at the American Railway Express Company where her husband worked, and that there was no prejudice in her Phoenix neighborhood. Such experiences must certainly not have been the norm for Indian people in Arizona, a state which only finally allowed American Indians to vote in 1948. Her story is an Indian version of the Horatio Alger myth--"Minority people can climb the ladder of success by hard work."[29] Although she recognizes what was traditionally a part of her culture, she has adapted to and adopted an alien way of life.

Florence Shipek in her comments about Delfina Cuero recognized the dilemma faced in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s by Indian people:

> This autobiography is typical of life stories of most of the Indians who had no place to call their own. . . . All relate the same search for a place to live and the same terrible struggle to feed and clothe the children, whom they loved dearly. . . . They hold no bitterness about the past and are only looking for the chance to work and to earn enough to feed and clothe their children. They feel that they have survived through the crises and that there will be a future for their children as the children are learning the new ways.[30]

Delfina's life is described as typical of the "destruction of Indian self-sufficiency on the land, of Indian society, culture, and religion." The recognition of the loss is a bitter one, for the lessons taught by the grandmothers and through the stories don't work in the society anymore. Delfino and her children become victims of her men's anger and the changes in the culture result in disintegration of family ties as well as the loss of the traditional ways.

Sah-gan-de-oh speaks for herself and for others of her generation when she remarks that her story is similar to "many other American Indians of today who are completely integrated in the American way of life.[31] Yet she sees a greater purpose in sharing her experiences:

> It is my hope that those of you who read this will better understand us. We are not refugees from another world, feathered and warlike as the TV and movies depict us but a proud race who love our heritage and are striving to keep alive our own culture.[32]

Although she wished to keep alive her culture, she had accepted the philosophy taught at Haskell-- "They all helped us to become better citizens and adjust to a better way of life."[33] In her own teaching she adopted the attitude of an outsider: "We had the most adorable little papooses. . . . I thought it a shame those babies had been taken away from their homes at so early an age but they didn't seem to be the least bit unhappy or homesick."[34] She accepted the policy of termination as inevitable and ends her book with a diatribe against her own people, blaming them for whatever problems they have. She faults the parents for not making public education compulsory, blames tribal politics for internal problems, says parents use welfare checks

at local bars, and finally says the housing situation could be improved "with a little extra work and a few less 'six-packs' of beers." In her simplistic analysis of Indian existence she divides all Indians into three groups--professionals, those making a good living, and those addicted to "firewater."[35] Perhaps more than any other Indian woman writing at this time, Sah-gan-de-oh represents the assimilated Indian woman who believed wholeheartedly that the only way to survive was to completely assimilate into white society. Her analysis of the economic situation ignores the realities of prejudice and rejection Indian people have experienced. She appears to be too far from the memories of "what used to be" to recognize the traditional values and their place in her life.

The contemporary women's movement has focused on the role of women in society and change has been significant in individual lives as well as in society's perception of women's roles. Family, marriage, parent-child relationships, career opportunities--all have been carefully scrutenized during the past decade. The role of minority women has also been examined and the importance of ethnicity over feminism has been debated. Indian women repeatedly deny their interest in or need for "liberation," saying they cannot afford the luxury of feminist goals because they must devote their energies to keeping families intact, getting jobs, and fighting the political battles of their people. This attitude does not mean that Indian women have not achieved recognition, however. Ada Deer, Bea Medicine, Annie Wauneka, LaDonna Harris, Liz Cook-Lynn, and Buffy Sainte-Marie suggest the variety of successes Indian women have achieved in politics, education, medicine, and the arts. Throughout the country Indian women serve on tribal councils and Title IV committees. The belief that Indian women do not need the feminist movement is consistent with the Indian women have played within their societies through the years. Recent autobiographies reaffirm this belief. By examining the roles of Indian women in traditional societies, one begins to see the power which is alluded to by many contemporary Indian women in autobiographies which show how that power has been corrupted or diminished through the century.

Looking at contemporary life stories one finds that the old methods of obtaining autobiographies still exist today. Nancy Lurie edited Mountain Wolf Woman's story; David E. Jones recorded the story of Sanapia, Don Barnett and Rick Sterling edited Bobbi Lee's story. The editors' level of awareness

about Indian perspectives is generally higher, however, and is reflected in the methods of presentation as well as the editorial comments. Nancy Lurie explains why Mountain Wolf Woman told her story--her niece requested it--and explains her own purposes--to provide a literary document as well as an anthropological source. She provides extensive explanatory footnotes for the reader, thus enabling Mountain Wolf Woman to tell as much as possible her own story free from intrusion. Nancy Lurie focuses on the role of the Winnebago woman and compares Mountain Wolf Woman with her brother Crashing Thunder:

> Mountain Wolf Woman's autobiography is a predictable reflection of greater self-confidence enjoyed by women in comparison to men in a culture undergoing rapid and destructive changes. As was true of many American Indian groups, the roles of wife, mother, and homemaker for which the Winnebago girl was prepared could be fulfilled in adulthood despite the vagaries of acculturation. . . . Winnebago boys were prepared for traditional roles as warriors, hunters and shamans long after these roles stood little chance of effective fulfillment."[36]

Just as Mountain Wolf Woman adapted, Sanapia adjusted to Christianity and peyotism, while maintaining the traditional patterns of Comanche culture. Her purpose is clearly stated--to pass down necessary information to the next eagle doctor. Ironically, despite the almost 70-year span since the first recorded women's autobiographies, Jones comments, "Women occupied an inferior position in society, though they were respected for their full share in the food quest."[37] Sanapia, however, in the narrative clearly states she considered herself equal to a male.[38] In this narrative the purpose again is to document a life in such a way as to illuminate a culture's history and cultural patterns. In this regard it is very similar to those stories collected by the earliest ethnographers.

The most recent autobiographies differ substantially from all of those which have already been discussed. Indian women are beginning to tell their own stories in English without interpreters or editors to restructure the material. Bobbi Lee, although her story is told with editors, is not telling the story to provide ethnographic material but rather to respond to the oppression of her people with a political perspective. She recognizes the three responses to oppression which have characterized Indian experience of this century and which are reflected in the autobiographies. There is the submission and integration response which led many Indian people to

assimilate and adopt the dominant nation's values, aspirations, and world view. Another response to oppression through the century has been through internalized violence, violence which is manifested through drugs, alcohol, prostitution, and physical abuse. Bobbi Lee sees a more positive response for her generation through self determination, Red Power and a spate of political movements and causes. The 1970s have brought Wounded Knee, the Trail of Broken Treaties, The Longest Walk, fish-ins, and numerous other expressions of Indian power. This renewal of interest in Indian experience is reflected in the recent autobiographical works. Bobbi Lee's ancestors earlier in the century responded to oppression by submission and integration, by acceptance of an inferior status within a dominant culture. She details the violence which has often characterized Indian experience, a violence which the writers in the 40s and 50s sought to explain away as a result of too much "firewater." She recognizes finally the role of contemporary Indian women within a society still operating by traditional values:

> Most of the militants there [at a demonstration in Olympia, Washington] were women and three of them did most of the speaking. . . . They were traditionalists so there was nothing unusual about women acting as spokemen for the group. In fact, they told me they were having trouble getting the men involved. The only man who spoke was Hank Adams, who'd been to university and wasn't traditional.[39]

Canadian Indian women, perhaps because of a double dilemma of identity in a country which quite arbitrarily categorizes women according to heritage as well as the husband's identity, have written a great deal about their position within contemporary society. Maria Campbell in Halfbreed, states the purpose of her book:

> ". . . what it is like to be a halfbreed woman in our country. I want to tell you about the joys and sorrows, the oppressing poverty, the frustrations and the dreams."[40]

And Emma LaRoque, having experienced the contemporary struggle for identity, describes her and other women's dilemma--that Native people are faced with two choices. They may choose to remain Indian which to many associates them with the reservation or choose to join the dominant society which is erroneously linked with being white. Her concern is that non-Indians treat Indian existence as frozen in time and assume that Indian culture cannot change.[41] In a paper delivered at MLA in 1977,[42] Paula Gunn Allen discussed the alienation of the half-breed. She spoke of

biculturation today; but it is a bicultruation which is not new, a dilemma that has existed certainly from the moment of first contact. When the first Indian women began allowing the stories of their lives to be committed to paper, to be edited and analyzed by those from another culture who did not understand the taboos, the rituals, or the roles, the differences in culture became more apparent. For a brief period midcentury Indian women tried to fit the mold of white society, to condemn those Indians who clung to tradition, who did not accept the new ways. But even they did not stray far from their heritage, recognizing always from whence they came and at the same time not being sure how to cope with that heritage.

Although the changes pointed out in this paper might indicate that the autobiographies of Native American women have progressed in a linear manner, close examination reveals that the elements which appeared in the earliest recorded life stories continue to appear in the most recent works. Above all, the desire to preserve the heritage is emphasized in all the materials reflecting the lives of Native American women. Such preservation continues to be accomplished in similar ways. Family ties continue to be important. Especially significant as a strong force in native cultures is the grandmother, both mythical and real. It is the grandmother who often is the storyteller, the preserver of the past, and the strength for the future. Her role as storyteller emphasizes the role of the oral tradition and the significance of the stories. This emphasis on the role of the grandmother highlights another significant subject covered in most of the autobiographies, the emphasis on sex roles and division of labor. In earlier autobiographies and in earlier times the division of labor was far more explicit and roles were defined and understood by the tribe and by the individuals. Recent accounts, however, emphasize the disintegration that has resulted from the lack of defined roles. In contemporary accounts the female is responsible for holding the family together, getting jobs, and raising the next generation. The most significant transition in the autobiographies reflects this blurring of defined sex roles. Roles which once were defined by the tribe and by tradition are now being questioned by society, by political movements, and by the people themselves.

The most recent collection of Indian women's voices, I Am the Fire of Time, accurately reflects those concerns which existed in the minds of Indian women through the years. In the contemporary interviews Katz conducted,

she heard such comments as the following:

> They will have to learn to live in a society that doesn't fully accept them.[43]
>
> Indian women have always been strong. They've kept families together.[44]
>
> It is becoming necessary to be modern in order to preserve the old ways.[45]
>
> Within each of us there is a struggle between traditional values and new lifestyles.[46]

The Indian woman is and has been strong within her culture. The evidence from the women themselves supports this perspective. The trappers who desired Indian women, the missionaries whose religion dictated women be defined as inferior, the painters who saw only romantic figures--all were viewing Indian women from a decidedly ethnocentric position. The life stories of Indian women contradict these images and support the view that the role of the Indian woman was and is defined within Native American cultures as important and essential.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Witt, Shirley Hill, "The Brave-Hearted Women," Akwesasne Notes, 8(Early Summer 1976), 17.

[2]Mathes, Valerie Shirer, "A New Look at the Role of Women in Indian Society," American Indian Quarterly, 2(Summer 1975), 131.

[3]Ewers, John C. "Mothers of the Mixed Bloods: The Marginal Woman in the History of the Upper Missouri," in Probing the American West, Kenneth Ross Toole, ed. (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico, 1962).

[4]Ewers, John C. "Deadlier Than the Male," American Heritage, 16(1965), 10-13.

[5]Kidwell, Clara Sue, "Bright Eyes: The Story of Susette La Flesche, An Omaha Indian," Journal of Ethnic Studies, 2(Winter 1975), 118.

[6]Kidwell, p.122.

[7]Fewkes, J. Walter, 40th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1925), p. 1.

[8]Kroeber, A.L., The Nature of Culture (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 320.

[9]Kroeber, p. 324

[10]Parsons, Elsie Clews, American Indian Life (New York: Viking Press, 1922). This volume is a collection of twenty-four vignettes composed by anthropologists based on their research. Presented as non-fiction, they are, however, fictional accounts.

[11]Michelson, Truman, "Narrative of a Southern Cheyenne Woman," Smithsonian Misc.Collections, 87(1932), p. 9.

[12]Michelson, Truman, "Autobiography of a Fox Indian Woman," 40th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1925), p. 298.

[13]Linderman, Frank B., Pretty Shield, Medicine Woman of the Crows (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), p. 11.

[14]Underhill, Ruth, "Autobiography of a Papago Woman" Memoirs of the American Anthropological Assc., 46 (1936), p.3.

[15]Underhill, p. 4.

[16]Waheenee (Buffalo-Bird Woman), An Indian Girl's Story told to Gilbert L. Wilson. (St. Paul, Minnesota: Webb. Pub. Co., 1921), p. 175-6.

[17]Waheenee, p. 189

[18]Michelson, Truman,"Narrative of an Arapaho Woman," American Anthropologist, 35(Oct.-Dec. 1933), p. 605.

[19]Linderman, p. 24.

[20]Linderman, p. 251.

[21]Young, Lucy, "Out of the Past; A True Indian Story," California Historical Society Quarterly, 20 (December 1941), p. 358.

[22]Colson, Elizabeth, Autobiographies of Three Pomo Women (Berkeley: Archaeological Research Facility, Department of Anthroplogy, University of California, 1974), p. 82.

[23]Lurie, Nancy, "Indian Women: A Legacy of Freedom," in Look to the Mountaintop. Ed. Robert Iacopi. (San Jose: Gousha, 1972).

[24]Washburn, Heluiz Chandler, and Anauta, Land of the Good Shadows: The Life Story of Anauta, an Eskimo Woman (New York: The John Day Company, 1940), p. xv.

[25]Qoyawayma, Polingaysi (Elizabeth White), No Turning Back (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1964), p. 26.

[26]Qoyawayma, p. 174.

[27]Sekaquaptewa, Helen, Me and Mine (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1969).

[28]Shaw, Anna Moore, A Pima Past (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974).

[29]Shaw, p. 166.

[30]Shipek, Florence C., The Autobiography of Delfina Cuero, A Diegueno Indian (Los Angeles: Dawson's Book Ship, 1968), p. 15.

[31]Winnie, Lucille (Jerry) or Sah-gen-de-oh, Sah-gen-de-oh, the Chief's Daughter (New York: Vantage, 1969), p. 7.

[32]Winnie, p. 7.

[33]Winnie, p. 58.

[34]Winnie, p. 56.

[35]Winnie, p. 185.

[36]Lurie, Nancy Oestreich, Mountain Wolf Woman, Sister of Crashing Thunder: The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), p. 100.

[37]Jones, David, Sanapia, Comanche Medicine Woman, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1972), p. 9.

[38]Jones, p. 4

[39]Barnett, Don and Sterling, Rick, Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel (Richmond, B.C., Canada: LSM Inf. Center, 1975), p. 91-92.

[40]Campbell, Maria, Halfbreed (Toronto, Canada: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), p. 8.

[41]LaRogue, Emma, Defeathering the Indian (Agincourt, Canada: The Book Society of Canada Limited, 1975), p. 10.

[42]Allen, Paula Gunn, "A Stranger in my own Life: Alienation in Native American Prose and Poetry," MLA Meetings, December, 1977.

[43]Katz, Jane, I Am the Fire of Time: The Voices of Native American Women (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977), p. 11.

[44]Katz, p. 122.

[45]Katz, p. 154.

[46]Katz, p. 162.

SOURCES QUOTED

Allen, Paula. "A Stranger in my own Life: Alienation in Native American Prose and Poetry." Modern Language Association Meetings, December, 1977.

Barnett, Don and Sterling, Rick (eds.) Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel; Struggles of a Native Canadian Woman. Richmond, B.C., Canada: LSM Information Center, 1975.

Campbell, Maria. Halfbreed. Toronto, Canada: McClelland and Stewart, 1973.

Colson, Elizabeth (ed.) Autobiographies of Three Pomo Women. Berkeley: Archaeological Research Facility, Department of Anthropology, University of California, 1974.

Ewers, John C. "Deadlier Than the Male." American Heritage, 16(1965), 10-13.

_____. "Mothers of the Mixed-Bloods: The Marginal Woman in the History of the Upper Missouri." In Probing the American West. Ed. Kenneth Ross Toole. Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico, 1962.

Jones, David Ed. (ed.) Sanapia, Comanche Medicine Woman. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1972.

Katz, Jane B. I Am the Fire of Time: The Voices of Native American Women. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977.

Kidwell, Clara Sue. "Bright Eyes: The Story of Susette La Flesche, an Omaha Indian." Journal of Ethnic Studies, 2(Winter 1975), 117-122.

Kroeber, A.L. The Nature of Culture. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952.

LaRoque, Emma. Defeathering the Indian. Agincourt, Canada: The Book Society of Canada Limited, 1975.

Linderman, Frank B. (ed.) Pretty Shield, Medicine Woman of the Crows. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972. (Originally published as Red Mother, New York: John Day Co., 1932.)

Lurie, Nancy Oestreich. "Indian Women: A Legacy of Freedom." In Look to the Mountaintop. Ed. Robert Iacopi. San Jose: Gousha, 1972.

_____. Mountain Wolf Woman, Sister of Crashing Thunder: the Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966.

Mathes, Valerie Shirer. "A New Look at the Role of Women in Indian Society." American Indian Quarterly, 2(Summer 1975), 131-139.

Michelson, Truman. "Autobiography of a Fox Indian Woman." 40th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1918-1919. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1925.

_____. "Narrative of an Arapaho Woman." American Anthropologist, 35(Oct.-Dec. 1933), 595-610.

_____. "Narrative of a Southern Cheyenne Woman." Smithsonian Misc. Collections, 87(1932), 1-13.

Parsons, Elsie Clews. American Indian Life. New York: Viking Press, 1922.

Qoyawayma, Polingaysi (Elizabeth Q. White). No Turning Back: A True Account of a Hopi Indian Girl's Struggle to Bridge the Gap Between the World of her People and the World of the White Man. Told to Vada F. Carlson. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1964.

Shaw, Anna Moore. A Pima Past. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974.

Shipek, Florence C. (ed.) The Autobiography of Delfina Cuero: A Diegueno Indian. Los Angeles: Dawson's Book Ship, 1968.

Udall, Louise (ed.) Me and Mine: The Life Story of Helen Sekaquaptewa. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1969.

Underhill, Ruth (ed.) "The Autobiography of a Papago Woman." Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association, 46(1936).

Waheenee (Buffalo-Bird Woman). An Indian Girl's Story. Told to Gilbert L. Wilson. Illustrated by Frederick N. Wilson. St. Paul, Minnesota: Webb Publishing Co., 1921.

Washburne, Heluiz Chandler and Anauta. Land of the Good Shadows: The Life Story of Anauta, an Eskimo Woman. New York: The John Day Co., 1940.

Winnie, Lucille (Jerry or Sah-gan-de-oh). Sah-gan-de-oh, the Chief's Daughter. New York: Vantage, 1969.

Witt, Shirley Hill. "The Brave-Hearted Women." Akwesasne Notes, 8(Early Summer 1976), 16-17.

Young, Lucy. "Out of the Past; A True Indian Story." Told by Lucy Young of Round Valley Indian Reservation to Edith V.A. Murphey. California Historical Society Quarterly, 20(December 1941), 349-364.

ADDITIONAL AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WORKS BY NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN

Abeita, Louise (E-yeh-shire). I Am a Pueblo Indian Girl. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1939.

Adams, Winona. "An Indian Girl's Story of a Trading Expedition to the Southwest about 1841." The Frontier, 10(May 1930).

Bennett, Kay. Kaibah: Recollections of a Navajo Girlhood. Los Angeles: Western Lore Press, 1964.

Cook-Lynn, Liz. Then Badger Said This. New York: Vantage Press, 1977.

Dominguez, Chona. "Bygone Days." In H. Seiler Cahuilla Texts. Language Science Monographs Bloomington: Indiana University, 6(1970), 148-152.

Dickson, Lovat (ed.) Half-Breed, the Story of Grey Owl. London: Peter Davie's, 1939.

Hopkins, Sarah Winnemucca. Life Among the Paiutes: Their Wrongs and Claims. Edited by Mrs. Horace Mann. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1883.

Lone Dog, Louise. Strange Journey: The Vision Life of a Psychic Indian Woman. Edited by Vinson Brown. Healdsburg, Calif.: Naturegraph Co., 1964.

Pitseolak. Pitseolak: Pictures Out of My Life. Edited by Dorothy Eber. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972.

Price, Anna (Her Eyes Grey). "Personal Narrative of Anna Price." In Western Apache Raiding and Warfare, Keith H. Basso (ed.) Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1971.

Reichard, Gladys A. Dezba, Woman of the Desert: Life Among the Navajo Indians. Glorieta, New Mexico: Rio Grande Press, 1971.

Scott, Lalla. Karnee, A Paiute Narrative. Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1966.

Smithson, C.L. The Havasupai Woman. Anthropological Papers, University of Utah, 38(1959). Rpt. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1972.

Stanley, Mrs. Andrew. "Personal Narrative of Mrs. Andrew Stanley." In Western Apache Raiding and Warfare, Keith H. Basso (ed.) Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1971.

Velarde, Pablita. Old Father the Story Teller. Globe, AZ: D.S. Kind, 1960.

Yoimut. "Yoimut's Story, the Last Chunut." In Handbook of the Yokut Indians, F.F. Latta. Bakersfield, CA: Kern County Museum, 1949. 223-276.

Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Bonin). "Impressions of an Indian Childhood." Atlantic Monthly, 85(January 1900), 37-47.

_____. "The School Days of an Indian Girl." Atlantic Monthly, 85(February 1900), 185-194.

_____. "An Indian Teacher Among Indians." Atlantic Monthly, 85(March 1900), 381-386.

_____. "Why I am a Pagan." Atlantic Monthly, 90 (December 1902), 801-803.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN

Brown, Judith K. "Economic Organization and the Power of Women Among the Iroquois." Ethnohistory, 17(1970), 151-167.

Green, Rayna. "The Pocahantas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in Popular Culture." Massachusetts Review, 16(Autumn 1975), 698-714.

Gridley, Marion E. American Indian Women. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1974.

Jones, Louis Thomas. "Eloquent Indian Women." In Aboriginal American Oratory. Los Angeles: Southwest Museum, 1965.

Landes, Ruth. The Ojibwa Woman. New York: W.W. Norton, 1971.

Mathur, Mary E. Fleming. "Who Cares That a Woman's Work is Never Done. . .?" Indian Historian, 4(Summer 1971), 11-16.

Medicine, Bea. "The Anthropologist as the Indian's Image Maker." Indian Historian, 4(Fall 1971), 27-29.

_____. "The Role of Women in Native American Societies." Indian Historian, 8(Summer 1975), 51-53.

Miller, Dorothy I. "Native American Women: Leadership Images." Integrateducation, 16(Jan.-Feb.1978), 37-39.

Niethammer, Carolyn. Daughters of the Earth: The Lives and Legends of American Indian Women. New York: Collier Books, 1977.

O'Meara, Walter. Daughters of the Country: The Women of the Fur Traders and Mountain Men. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968.

Randle, Martha Champion. "Iroquois Women Then and Now." Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 149. Symposium on Local Diversity in Iroquois Culture, ed. by William N. Fenton. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office 1951. pp. 169-80.

Terrell, John Upton and Terrell, Donna M. Indian Women of the Western Morning: Their Life in Early America. New York: Dial Press, 1974.

Witt, Shirley Hill, "Native Women Today: Sexism and the Indian Woman." Civil Rights Digest, (Spring 1974), 29-35.

Wauneka, Annie D. "The Dilemma for Indian Women." Wassaja, 4(September 1976), 8.